

DESIGN CARD 1: THE HOUSE ON THE SITE

Buildings are strategically placed in the 'ugliest' places – not the most beautiful or the easiest to build on. You want the nice places to remain, to see the beautiful parts and use them in everyday life outdoors.

Self-builder and architect visit the site at a time when the weather is good. Bring A3 paper on a writing board, a measuring stick or graduated tape measure, plastic tape to mark things with, a small sledgehammer and sticks to drive into the ground.

- ✓ If you only have a measuring stick: Measure your step length by stepping ten to twenty steps and measuring the distance. Two steps are about 1.5 meters on flat ground, but this varies with person and place.

Inspect the site together:

- ✓ Set out the approximate plot boundaries with sticks.
- ✓ Note on the paper how one gets to the site on foot, by bike and car.
- ✓ Note north-south-east-west directions using a compass App in your phone.
- ✓ Note what the neighbors have near your site.
- ✓ Note the qualities of the site: fine trees, nice bushes, visible mountains, running water, slopes, moss, nice-looking seating, attractive places for cultivation, wonderful light, stunning sound, ant stacks, and more. Put these on the paper by measuring/stepping from the boundaries. Put plastic ribbons around trees, bushes, etcetera, that are nice and should be saved.
- ✓ Note potential problems on the site, such as wet areas, vole holes, diseased plants, waste, etcetera.

Imagine your home on the site:

- ✓ Where does the house fit on the site? Where does the sun rise and set, winter

and summer? Where are the nice views you want to see from inside the house? Where is it windy in the winter and summer? Where is it dry and wet? What do you want to avoid seeing? Position the house with regard to listed qualities (do not destroy) and problems (solve them with your building).

- ✓ How do you approach the house? Where should the entrance be?
- ✓ What shape should the house be? Do you prefer a long narrow house or square?
- ✓ How big should the house be on the ground floor? You already know the approximate size you can afford, but you can build one floor or two: Which is best for the location?
- ✓ Use sticks to mark the corners of the house.

When the house is in that location, discuss how to solve:

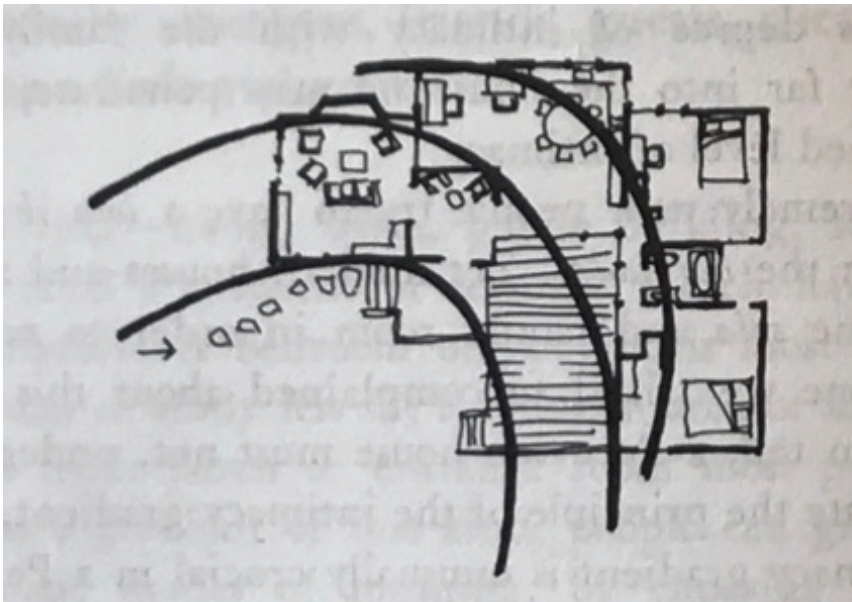
- ✓ Water. Where can a drilled well be placed?
- ✓ Drainage. Where could a private sewage treatment system be located?
- ✓ Solar cells. Where can free-standing solar cells and solar water heater be placed?
- ✓ Cultivation. Where could cultivated land or a greenhouse be located?
- ✓ Car. Where can cars be parked?

Adjust the location if needed and note the final location of the house on the paper. Put it up on your board on the wall in Egnahemsfabriken. Photograph all documents and place them in your folder on Google drive. The volunteer architect checks the house location with his or her mentor.

DESIGN CARD 2. DEGREE OF PRIVACY

Unless the rooms in a house are arranged in a sequence corresponding to their degree of privacy, then visits by strangers, friends, guests, customers and family will feel a bit uncomfortable.

Different rooms feel different with regard to privacy. A bedroom or sleeping area is perhaps the most private. Bathrooms often come next. A workplace is somewhere in between. For many people, the kitchen is the most public place. When rooms or functions follow the degree of privacy, it feels comfortable to have visitors enter



Alexander 1977: 612.

the home. This is because the person understands, based on the design, how far into the privacy sphere one is expected to move – though some may go further than others. It also feels safe for those who live there. For example, it feels safer to have a bedroom at the farthest from the front door, if you think the bedroom is the most private place.

But ideas about privacy vary from person to person. This pattern concerns you thinking about how you feel about the privacy of your home. Because you are going to build a small house, you should think of *functions* instead of rooms when you create this pattern. Include all the functions you want to have, even those that may end up outdoors or in another building.

- ✓ Note all the functions of your home on sticky notes. One function per note. Cook, sleep, shower, etcetera.
- ✓ What function do you experience as the most private? What comes next? Think and discuss. It is the self-builder who decides.
- ✓ Put all functions in a row from most private to most public. Number them.
- ✓ Draw a line between the functions you want to be closely related.
- ✓ Save the result by documenting it on a sheet of paper.

When this design card is complete, the self-builder and architect have an idea of what functions the house and site should include and how these functions should relate to each other. Whether this can be realized is a later issue.

DESIGN CARD 3. THE KITCHEN IS THE HEART

Cooking together – can be just as enjoyable as eating together.

Separating kitchen from dining area and parlor became desirable in rich homes with servants, and this, according to the architect Alexander, later meant that women, who took over responsibility for cooking from servants, were separated from the rest of the family while cooking. In order to assume joint responsibility for cooking, many today want the kitchen to be the focal point, both in everyday life and when having visitors. This means that the kitchen needs to be designed to function for several people working with cooking and clearing the table at the same time. Space is also needed to do other things in the kitchen, such as visitors sitting and talking or children doing homework. Our modern environmentally aware society also demands that there be space for sorting waste, and innovative methods of food storage may be needed.

Because you are going to build a small house, there is not much room for the kitchen. This makes it even more important to think through what is important to you. Discuss the following:

- ✓ First, **is** the kitchen important to you? Do you even want a kitchen? Decide for yourself.
- ✓ What *functions* do you want in your kitchen? Think about everyday life and having visitors. List the functions. Write them on sticky notes. Prioritize functions – space is limited.

- ✓ Can the kitchen be outdoors? Outdoor kitchens can be very nice. Maybe not so practical in wintertime, but think about it – perhaps parts of the kitchen could be outside, which would save a great deal of space in a small house.
- ✓ Can you share a kitchen with someone who lives nearby? This would make your house considerably cheaper and encourage social activity around cooking and eating.
- ✓ Can the whole house be a large kitchen? Maybe that is the solution for you?
- ✓ What style do you want for your kitchen? Robust and rustic? Open shelves and things hanging on the walls? Tight, cabinet doors, clean and dust-free? Light, with nature visible through large windows or a glazed door? Cozy, cave-like and without transparency? Look at pictures the architect has brought and discuss your desired design.
- ✓ Summarize your preferences, document them.

When this design card is complete, the self-builder and architect have a picture of how the kitchen would feel and be connected to the rest of the house. The kitchen is thus the starting point for discussions about what the whole house should look like and feel like inside. The soul of the house. (If the self-builder does not want a kitchen, this pattern is obviously removed.)

DESIGN CARD 4. THE BATHROOM

Bathroom for practical purposes or for pleasure?

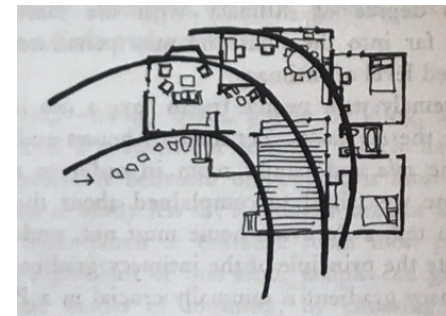
Having bathrooms for pleasure was common in the past; think about the beautiful public bathhouses. This largely disappeared with puritanism, where it was considered to be the breeding ground for the evil society. But the pleasure aspect has returned, now in more private environments. Architect Alexander even argues that communities that support the development of public baths for pleasure promote peace and counteract sadism. How do *you* want your bathroom to be? For practical purposes or pleasure, or both?

The bathroom consists of various functions. You started discussing them in the design-card »Degree of privacy«.

- ✓ Write down all functions of the bathroom on sticky notes. Also, consider functions that have to do with pleasure, if you want such a bathroom.
- ✓ Note which functions you feel should be private and which should be public. Some functions need to be both.
- ✓ Think about whether functions must be indoors or whether they can be outdoors – note this.
- ✓ Draw three semi-circles as in the picture below and place the sticky notes with functions in relation to them. Because you are building a small house, there is probably no room to duplicate, that is, to make bathroom functions both private and public, which means you need to make a decision on what you prioritize.
- ✓ Document the results.

Designing bathrooms also means deciding how to relate to environmental aspects. These decisions need to be made in parallel with the above design exercise. The decisions depend not only on your preferences, but also on the conditions of the site, for example if there is water and sewage on the site and if it is possible to make your own sewage treatment system. The architect brings pictures of different solutions. Discuss:

- ✓ Will you have a water toilet? If you are going to have a dry toilet, what solution do you want?
- ✓ Will you have urine separation? If yes, how should the urine be made use of?
- ✓ Will you recycle water from the bathroom sink, shower, laundry, kitchen sink? If so, what will you use it for? For irrigation? For the toilet?
- ✓ Will you have municipal water or your own well? If own well, what kind of well?
- ✓ Will you have municipal sewage or your own sewage treatment system? If your own, what kind?
- ✓ Note all choices.

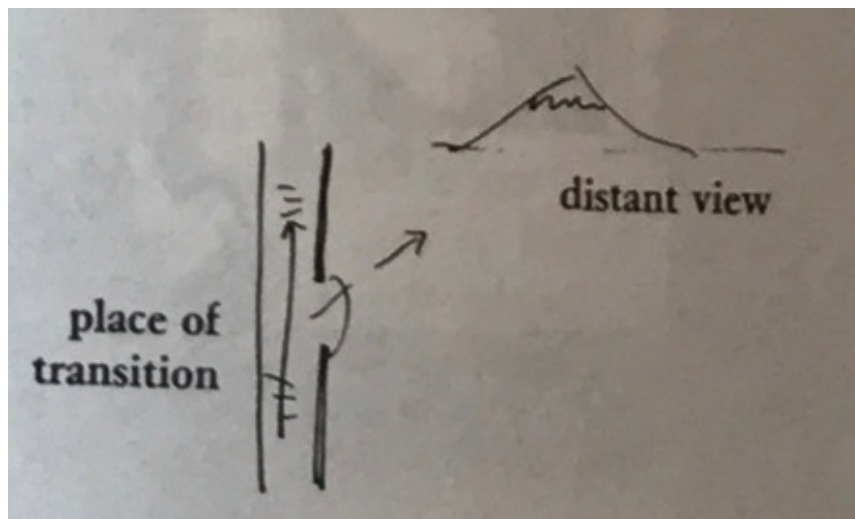


Alexander 1977: 612.

DESIGN CARD 5. ZEN VIEW

The more magnificent a view is displayed and the more visible it is every day, the sooner it will fade for those who live there.

The architect Alexander found the archetype of »zen view« in a Buddhist monastery in Japan. The enormous view of the valley was visible only from one place in the monastery: a narrow interstice on the wall in a hallway between two buildings. You only saw the view for one second each time you passed through the hallway. The idea of »zen view« is thus about preserving the most beautiful view, so that it is kept alive even for those who live in the house, not just for visitors who see it for the first time.



Alexander 1977: 643.

Go back to the documentation from the design card »The house on the site« and see if there is something really beautiful visible from your site – something you would like to be surprised by now and then, instead of getting used to. Discuss the following:

- ✓ Where do you see this view in the house? Is it possible to do a »zen view« for it? Where?
- ✓ Are there places outdoors where you can create a »zen view« for this, by building a fence, sculpture, or the like?
- ✓ Summarize and document.

This design card touches only on one detail, but is included because it will otherwise probably be forgotten. It also returns thoughts to the place – how the house is situated on the site.

DESIGN CARD 6. BUILD A MODEL

It is the self-builder who should feel competent, not necessarily the architect.

Three-dimensional design results are easily accessible to people in general, and building a model is a particularly useful tool for getting people to feel engaged and competent. The self-builder should thus feel very confident in taking command of the house design: feel free, dare to try. The architect's role is very much a matter of process management. How can self-builders be supported so that they give shape to the house they want and stay within a set budget?

- ✓ On the table, place a large piece of cardboard in A1 format, on which the results from the design card »The house on the site« are inscribed. The site's qualities and problems are thus highlighted and the house's preliminary location and entrance are drawn.
- ✓ Place the house's functions (sticky notes) on the board and start creating a model of the house and site with cardboard, sticks, twigs, stones, etcetera.
- ✓ Think of the house and surroundings, deriving inspiration from the picture of the vase and two faces. Both have their own existence, both need to be designed equally carefully; they should fit together, but neither should be superior to the other.
- ✓ Play. Try new variants.



At the end of the day, the self-builder and architect have a model of how the functions shape the house, how the house is situated on the site, how the house shapes the surroundings – and vice versa.

Co-design in Hammarkullen 2010 with architect Carin Smuts from South Africa. Photo: Jenny Stenberg.

